



Passenger Pigeon

Newsletter of the Cincinnati Bird Club

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February 2003

Field Trip to Reelfoot Lake, Tennessee

RAPTOR, Inc. and the Cincinnati Bird Club are sponsoring a field trip to Reelfoot Lake on February 15th - February 17th, 2003. Reelfoot is located in the northwest corner of Tennessee near Union City.

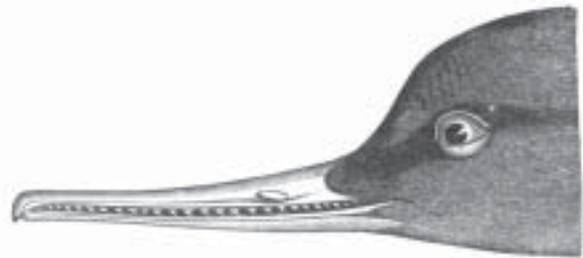
The Reelfoot Lake National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and surrounding areas are great places for viewing wintering bald eagles. The lake is located near the Mississippi flyway and is also an excellent place to see water birds. In fact, as many as thousands of geese and ducks and in some years up to 200 bald eagles inhabit Reelfoot during the winter.

In addition to birding opportunities, the NWR provides a wide variety of interpretive, educational, and wildlife recreational opportunities for the visiting public. Facilities include a Visitor Contact Station, a self-guided auto tour, two observation towers, hiking trails, and a backyard watchable wildlife habitat showcase.

For lodging, carpooling, and registration information please contact Jeff Hays at (513) 521-4477 or JLHAYS@fuse.net. We will also have designated meeting times and places each day for those of you who are unable to come for the entire weekend.

February Field Trip

Our local trip this month will be to Caesar Creek Lake and Spring Valley Wildlife Area. We'll probably be tired of winter residents by then, but waterfowl migration should be started by the end of the month. Other spring migrants won't really be expected that early, but a Snipe or even a Virginia Rail are outside possibilities. We'll meet at 8:30 a.m. on Saturday, February 22 at the Caesar Creek swimming beach parking lot, for a half-day field trip. From I-71, take the Ohio 73 exit and turn left. Just past the bridge over the lake, turn right into the park and follow the signs to the beach. For more information, contact Ned Keller at 941-6497 or keller@one.net.



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Titmice, Chickadees, and Crows, Oh My!

By Jon Seymour

In August of 2002 I began to miss the call of the titmouse. I live in Greenhills with Winton Woods only a block away in three directions and several feeders in my yard operating all year round. Titmice can be usually found at my feeders with several observations each day and whenever I walked into the yard I would hear one calling from somewhere nearby. That stopped in August. In November I asked a question on Ned Keller's website whether other birders had noticed a decline. The responses I got were mixed. Some people were missing titmice – others had as many as usual.

Gaining an understanding of the current status of titmice was not going to happen by my just asking around. Fortunately, I participate in the Cornell University FeederWatch Program. The program gathers data on bird feeder observations from all over the United States and Canada during the winter months. A few years ago Cornell placed this data on a computer basis and collects a large portion of its data immediately through computer reports. What could this data base tell me regarding my observations?

I put on my Sherlock costume and hit the computer achieves of the FeederWatch data base. The data in the FeederWatch base are arranged by site location, the percent of observations at each site, and the average maximum number of birds at each feeder. The tables below shows the current and past situation involving titmice through the first two months of the FeederWatch reports for this winter and the corresponding period for the past two winters in Ohio.

Table 1: Percent of Feeders Visited in Ohio During the Entire **Count Period 2002-03**

Two Week Count Periods	11-9-02 to 11-22-02	11-23-02 to 12-6-02	12-7-02 to 12-20-02	12-21-02 to 1-3-03	1-4-03 to 1-17-03
Number of reporting count sites	169*	171	158	150	102
Tufted Titmouse	50%	58%	59%	58%	55%

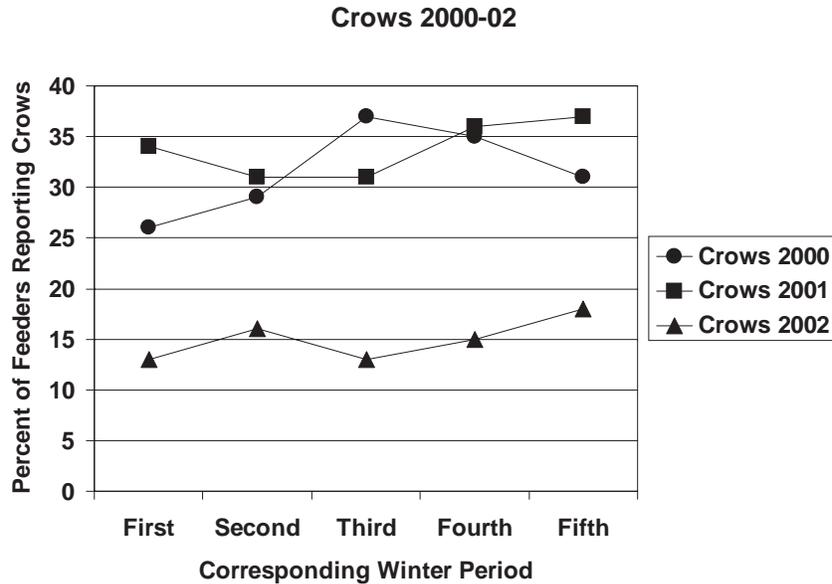
*Increased feeder counting sites between 2000-01 and 2001-02 were due to increased participation in the study. The lower number of counting sites in 2002-03 is due to the fact that current data comes from only those submitting data online. About half of the participants submit paper reports at the end of the counting season for the whole winters worth of data.

Table 2: Percent of Feeders Visited in Ohio during the Entire **Count Period 2000-01 and 2001-02**

Corresponding Count Period	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth
Count sites in 2001-02	319	324	340	349	353
Tufted Titmouse in 2001-02	73%	72%	74%	74%	71%
Count Sites in 2000-01	148	147	161	147	156
Tufted Titmouse in 2000*01	64%	65%	66%	66%	67%

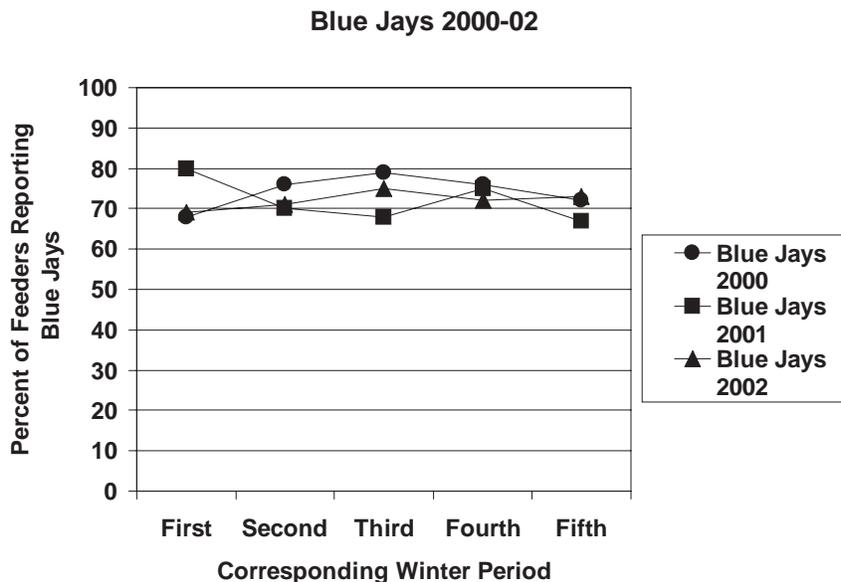
The average flock size at the feeder was unchanged and reported as 2 in all three years.

Speculation on this decrease centers on the question of whether this observed decline is the result of West Nile Virus (WNV). We know from the 2001 outbreak of WNV in the Northeast that Crow and Blue Jay populations were reduced. If we look at the same type of data for Crows and Blue Jays and examine other common feeder bird species we see some interesting trends for 2002-03.



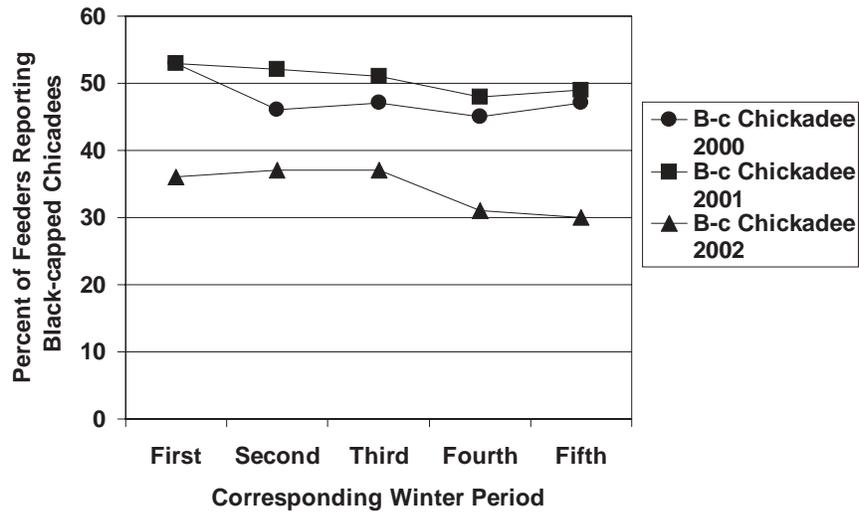
Graph 1: Percent of Crow sightings at Feeders in Ohio from 2000 to 2002

Feeder sightings of other species such as the Black-capped Chickadee seem depressed while similar species such as the Carolina Chickadee appeared unaffected. So far in 2002-03 all other species of common feeder birds were seen at feeders at similar rates to the last two years. In fact the declines in Crows and Tufted Titmice (and maybe Black-capped Chickadees) were conspicuous by their decline. Blue Jays, one of the species affected by WNV in the Northeast in the summer of 2001, seem to have not been affected in their attendance at the Ohio feeders so far this year.



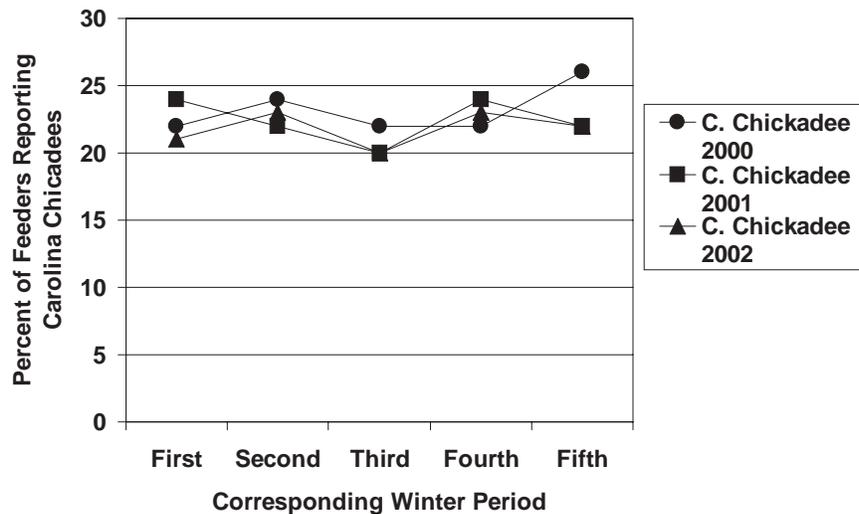
Graph 2: Percent of Blue Jay sightings at Feeders in Ohio from 2000 to 2002

Black-capped Chickadees 2000-02



Graph 3: Percent of Black-capped Chickadee sightings at Feeders in Ohio from 2000 to 2002

Caroline Chickadees 2000-02



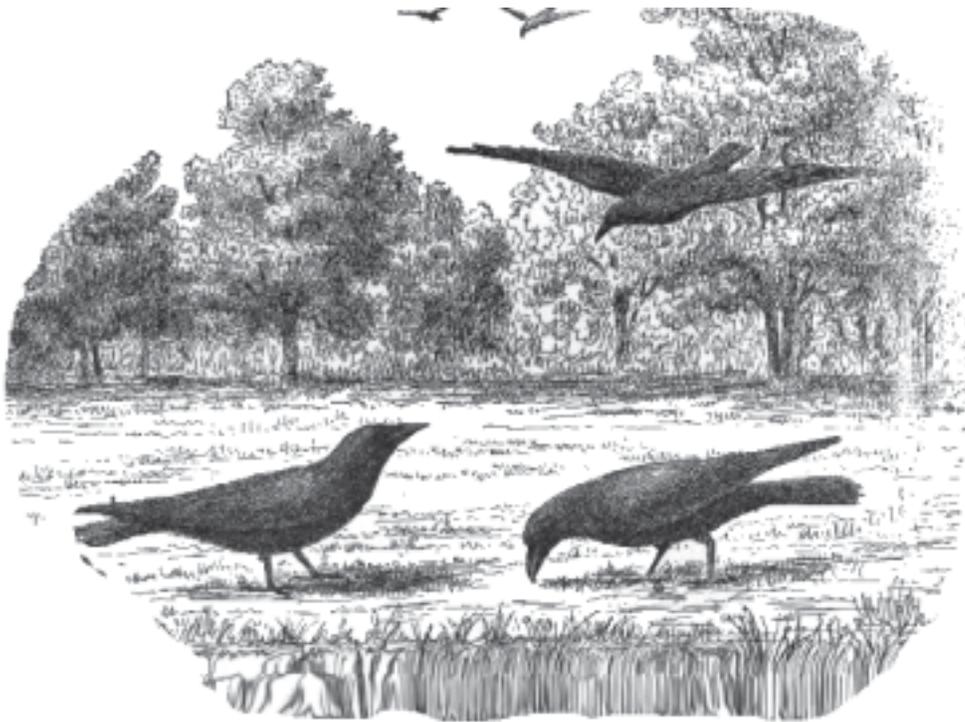
Graph 4: Percent of Carolina Chickadee sightings at Feeders in Ohio from 2000 to 2002

These data are of course only preliminary and there is much more data to collect and analyze. A similar observation of low numbers of Black-capped Chickadees last winter in the northeast ended with a return to normal observation rates at the end of the winter. Were the birds hiding in the woods? Were the numbers so far depleted that the woods had more food than the population needed and they did not need to supplement their diet at feeders until later in the winter. Was the population normal but the woods had bumper food crop last year, so they did not need to come out to feeders until the end of the winter.? Only further examination of the data on the population will shed light on these questions.

I don't really know if the population of titmice in Ohio has crashed due to WNV but to me the data suggest that there has been a serious problem since last winter. We may be able to add this species to the list of infected birds that are susceptible and die as a result of exposure.

What I do know is the data suggest a problem, and it is the middle of January and I still have not seen a single Tufted Titmouse at my feeders. Come to think of it I have not seen any Crows at my feeder either. Oh My!!!!

Cincinnati's Raptor Incorporated reported a large increase in raptors with confirmed WNV during the summer. They had nearly twice the number of sick and injured birds in their inventory. Many of these raptors subsequently died. This constitutes the first evidence that raptors were also heavily hit by WNV.



February Program

“Bird Photography from Ohio and Beyond”

by Bob Royse from Columbus, Ohio

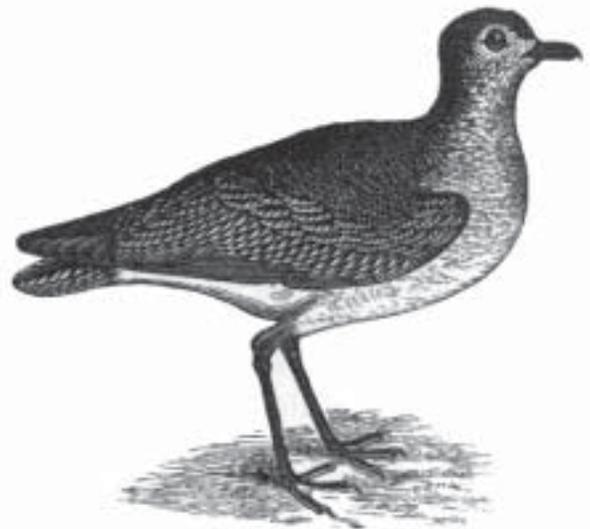
This program, to be held on Thursday, February 20, at 7:00 p.m. at the usual Sharon Woods location, will be a selection of bird photos from Ohio and a sample of bird photos from recent travels, roughly tracing the calendar year. Expect to see very high quality and close-up photographs of birds in natural habitats. Bob's photographs have graced the cover of *The Ohio Cardinal*, such as his photographs of Blue Grosbeak and flying Little Gull. In addition, many of his photographs, including a recent series of shorebirds, have embellished the inside of *The Ohio Cardinal*.

Robert Royse is a birder and amateur photographer living in Columbus, Ohio. He has been a professional musician since the age of 20 and has been employed as the English horn (cor anglais) soloist and oboist of the Columbus Symphony Orchestra since 1986. He was born near Buffalo, NY, but grew up in Rocky River, Ohio, a western Cleveland suburb. He attended 3 years of high school at the Interlochen Arts Academy in the northern lower Michigan peninsula after attending the summer camp there for 6 seasons, and then studied at the Cleveland Institute of Music as a student of John Mack, the Cleveland Orchestra's legendary principal oboist. He has had professional experience playing the English horn in the Akron and Canton Symphony Orchestras, with the San Francisco Symphony for a one-year appointment and one year with the soon to be defunct Kansas City Philharmonic. His interest in wildlife photography originally began while living in South Africa from 1983-1986, where he served as principal oboist for the Cape Performing Arts Board Orchestra in Cape Town. Enchanted by the scenery and wildlife, he purchased a Yashica FX-D and a few inexpensive

lenses and traveled extensively throughout southern Africa.

In the early '90's, he got interested in photographing the natural world of his native Ohio and since that time has updated his cameras and lenses to produce his remarkable current photographs. He considers himself first and foremost a musician and not a photographer, and has never pursued marketing his photographs. However, his photos have appeared, in a wide variety of book and magazine publications, CD covers and other diverse places. Due out in early 2003 is a book on warblers from Donald and Lillian Stokes containing 30 photos from his spring 2001 birding in southern Ohio and the Michigan Upper Peninsula.

All of his wildlife photos are shown in the wild in natural habitats. There are no captive zoo animals, birds at feeders, or feral exotics. Since he is a birder as well as a photographer, his goal is to represent the best of what he sees when he releases the camera's shutter, depicting birds in their environments both as realistically and as artistically as possible.



Passenger Pigeon by eMail

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To sign up for this service, send an eMail to the editors at keller@one.net. You can switch back to a paper copy at any time.



Contributors Wanted

The Passenger Pigeon needs your help! Don't worry, we're not hitting you up for money. Instead, we need your contributions in the form of articles or artwork for our newsletter. Or should we say, *your* newsletter. Please send your submissions to Ned or Kathy by the 20th of the month. If possible, we would prefer them by eMail to keller@one.net. But if that's not possible, you can also send them to 7899 Bridgetown Road, Cleves OH 45002.

Volunteers Needed

In the 1980's, BirdLife International began designating Important Bird Areas in Europe and Africa, with the idea of recognizing areas of particular importance to birds. Audubon began the program in the United States in 1995, in partnership with BirdLife International. Audubon Ohio, in turn, has been working on areas in our state since 2000. There is quite a bit more information about the program at <http://www.audubon.org/chapter/oh/oh/ibas.html>

One of the local areas designated as an Important Bird Area is Burnet Woods, based in part on its status as a magnet for migrating passerines, and in part on its history as a site for bird studies. In addition to other research, in past years Duncan Evered, David Styer and Steve Pelican have conducted daily censuses of spring migrants. Audubon Ohio is hoping to set up continuing monitoring of the area, based on the model developed by them.

To that end, we are looking for volunteers to participate in this project. You would need to be able to recognize migrant songbirds by their songs as well as by sight. You would also need to be able to commit to several mornings during the period from the second week of April through the third week of May, from about 6:30 to 10:00 a.m. We plan to set up a meeting of volunteers for late in March to work out the details of how this program would be organized. We also hope to extend the program to fall migration, a period for which there is very little Burnet Woods data.

To volunteer, or for more information about either this monitoring program or the Important Bird Areas project, contact Ned Keller at (513)941-6497 or keller@one.net.

<http://w3.one.net/~keller/cincybirds/goodbird/sighting.htm>

Recent Bird Sightings

Field Trips:
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521-4477

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Paul Wharton
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Treasurer:
Peggy Gatch
831-3378

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Kathy McDonald
941-6497

Programs:
Jay Lehman
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